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FOR S/S, ALSO FOR WHA FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2019  
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [OVIP](#) [CLINTON](#) [HILLARY](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO HAITI

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.5(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. As the first Secretary of State to travel to Port-au-Prince since 2005, your visit on Thursday sends Haitians a clear signal of continued, indeed intensified, U.S. support for a neighbor and friend in need. Haitians, both within the government and without, will respond positively to this mark of personal engagement at the start of your tenure as Secretary of State. They will see your visit as a link between the promises of the Donors Conference and the potential progress of tomorrow. Haiti is going through a difficult period now and the pledge of increased U.S. support, coupled with our strong leadership in the international community, will help get Haiti moving again. It will give its people and its government space and time to rebuild and focus once again on broader development and political goals so critical to the country's future. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Haiti made important and credible steps forward in 2006-2007, improving the security environment, building a solid macroeconomic base for growth, creating democratic institutions, and starting to address the many political and social challenges that had undermined stability and progress in Haiti for so many years. The United States, along with our partners in the hemisphere, were critical to those steps forward, both on a bilateral basis and through contributions to, and support for MINUSTAH. Forward movement during that period, although modest, was visible and encouraging.

13. (C) The events of 2008, however, brought these efforts to an abrupt halt. The "food riots" in April ushered in a period of political turmoil and economic upheaval. A spike in fuel prices undermined economic activity and in August, four successive tropical storms swept across the country and caused more than a billion dollars in damage. Lives, livelihoods and hope disappeared. The riots and the storms played havoc with economic growth and the international economic crisis weakened financial support for Haiti, both in the Diaspora (which sends remittances amounting to almost 20 percent of Haiti's GDP) and among some donors. In the face of the government's tepid response to the hurricanes and the economic downturn, the political consensus which brought Prime Minister Pierre Louis to office has frayed badly. The government now faces widespread popular and parliamentary criticism; at the same time, it grapples with a major budget deficit and lagging economic growth. These factors have contributed to the sense here that much of the hard-won progress of the 2006-2007 and, indeed the country's vision of its future, has been swept away by rioting, hurricanes, and political infighting.

14. (C) Haiti's leaders are working to restore a sense of purpose and direction, but it is a daunting task. There are foundations on which to build: an improving security environment, a relatively successful macroeconomic program (despite the recent economic shocks), significant and newly re-energized international support, and a government committed to more accountability. It is time to take those

assets and use them to move Haiti forward. You heard first hand in February from President Preval his concerns about jobs, the budget, and the pervasive influence of drugs here. Those themes will mark his Thursday meeting with you; he has refined and refocused his arguments, and he will welcome your commitment to work with Haiti on addressing these pressing matters. He knows that the times demand effective and concerted action; the challenge for his government is to realize those goals. The Prime Minister argues that getting Haiti over this short term crisis of funding and hurricane recovery will enable her government to focus on the longer term goal of building the country back. Whatever the perspective, the two leaders hope that the Donors Conference will prove to be the first step in getting Haiti back to work and that the conference, and your visit here, will be the means to recommit the international community to Haiti's future. That is, I believe, an objective that we share.

15. (C) What Haitians are looking for now is a strong USG commitment to help them over this period. The augmented assistance package that you announced today, coupled with our strong leadership, will be a critical component in that regard. Preval may argue that the results of the conference, while encouraging, will not be sufficient to address the country's longer term needs. I would suggest that one of your key messages here is to convey that the Conference and the partnership we are undertaking is not only about maximizing donor dollars, although that is indeed important - but also about using the conference and the renewed international engagement in Haiti that it signifies as a launching pad for a coherent, comprehensive program of economic and social development, strongly supported and endorsed by Haiti's friends. The plans are in place to do so, thanks to the hard work of the government and the donors in the lead up to the Donors Conference.

16. (C) Preval argues, with justification, that Haiti's future flows from its economic success. The United States has been generous. But Haiti must do its part. In addition to our voluminous and increasing assistance, the U.S. has passed preferential trade legislation (HOPE 2) that allows duty-free access for large classes of textiles assembled in Haiti for the next nine years. Another key message will be to underscore the importance of ensuring that industrial space and infrastructure for investors be made available and that the overall business and investment climate improve so that more investors will take advantage of the opportunity of HOPE 2 - a unique program in the hemisphere outside of CAFTA-DR. We are examining a variety of ways to help in this regard, but much of the heavy lifting has to come from the Haitians themselves. Improving the business and investment climate requires that the government redouble its effort to pursue the gamut of deficits in government - in the judiciary, parliament, and local government - which are the focal point of U.S. non-economic assistance. We share Preval's concerns about the nexus of drugs and corruption and their impact on the fragile state; our additional assistance will help begin the process of addressing this issue.

17. (C) You will also visit two sites in the Cite Soleil district of Port au Prince. Your presence there will spotlight the central U.S. role in rehabilitating a slum district that once epitomized the poverty, violence and anarchy that wracked Haiti 2000-2005. During 2004-2006, the gangs drove all Government of Haiti police and civilians out of the area, and then used the district as a safe haven from which to carry out kidnappings for ransom and other criminal enterprises. Cite Soleil now symbolizes how far Haiti has recovered and what can be done with a strategic program that links security and development. With the help of vigorous MINUSTAH intervention in 2006 and the DOD-funded 20 million Haiti Stabilization Initiative (HSI), Cite Soleil today is largely free of gang rule, and kidnappings have dropped sharply. HSI and Department of State programs are rebuilding infrastructure and putting people to work. Haitian National Police are returning to the area. Cite Soleil was quiet during the April 2008 rioting, and remains so during the

ongoing election campaign.

¶8. (C) While in Cite Soleil, you will visit the temporary clinic run by staff of the U.S. hospital ship USNS Comfort under Operation "Continuing Promise," a four-month tour of Caribbean nations. The ship is in Haiti April 9-19, where it will treat thousands of Haitian patients at this and another onshore clinic, and take patients on board for non-ambulatory operative procedures. Your tour of this clinic with USNS Comfort's Mission Commander, Commodore Bob "Linus" Lineberry, will demonstrate U.S. commitment to humanitarian assistance to the population chronically deprived of health services.

¶9. (C) Just prior to touring the clinic, you will meet with the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Haiti, Hedi Annabi (Tunisia), and the commander of UN military forces in Haiti, Major General Floriano Peixoto Vieira Neto (Brazil). Annabi heads the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which has 7,000 military, 2,000 police, and a number of civilian administrators and assistance personnel. Your meeting is an opportunity to express strong U.S. support for MINUSTAH. This peacekeeping mission is an unprecedented cooperative effort in hemispheric security, and a significant security plus for the U.S. Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, Ecuador and Paraguay contribute the great majority of the mission's troops and police. Brazil, which provides the MINUSTAH Force Commander, has been a MINUSTAH linchpin. This UN mission provides the ultimate security backup for Haiti's still-developing national police, and is the indispensable security umbrella for the political and economic reconstruction efforts that the U.S. and other donors are undertaking. It is also a partner of the U.S. in providing humanitarian, disaster, and development assistance. We expect MINUSTAH to remain in Haiti at least until 2011-12, when Haiti's police is programmed to reach force levels barely adequate to assure security.

¶10. (C) You will also visit a humanitarian assistance site in Cite Soleil funded by USAID. Your visit will serve two purposes: 1) spotlight U.S. humanitarian assistance to a particularly vulnerable population, and 2) provide a backdrop for your public announcement of increased U.S. food assistance to Haiti.

¶11. (SBU) On a personal note, we are honored that you will have the time to briefly meet with the Embassy community. This is a remarkable group of people. They worked tirelessly under extremely difficult, occasionally dangerous, conditions in the wake of the storms that hit Haiti last year to bring aid and comfort to Haitians in dire need. They reached out to our large American community in Haiti to assure their safety. And they even managed to move Embassy operations to our new Embassy compound during the April food demonstrations without missing a beat. I am very proud of them and I am certain you will be as well.

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